



Now serving you here in the 13th District

Now that the 2002 session has come to an end, I have moved my legislative office back into the 13th District, so that I can be more accessible to constituents. Through the remainder of the year, you can contact me at the 13th District office in Moses Lake at the address below.

I will be spending the first Thursday of every month at the **Kittitas County Courthouse** to make it easier for constituents in the west end of the district who want to meet with me to discuss issues and concerns. I will also be spending the third Wednesday of every month at the **Yakima County Courthouse** to make it easier for constituents from the Yakima County portion of the district to meet with me. You can call me at the number below to make an appointment, or just drop by either courthouse between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

13th District Office

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Rep. Janéa Holmquist • 2002 Session Review

A legislative update for constituents of the 13th District

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 2002 legislative session came to an end after the scheduled 60 days. While pleased that the taxpayers will not incur that added expense of a special session, the unwillingness of lawmakers to adequately address the budget deficit and other issues will wind up costing taxpayers plenty.

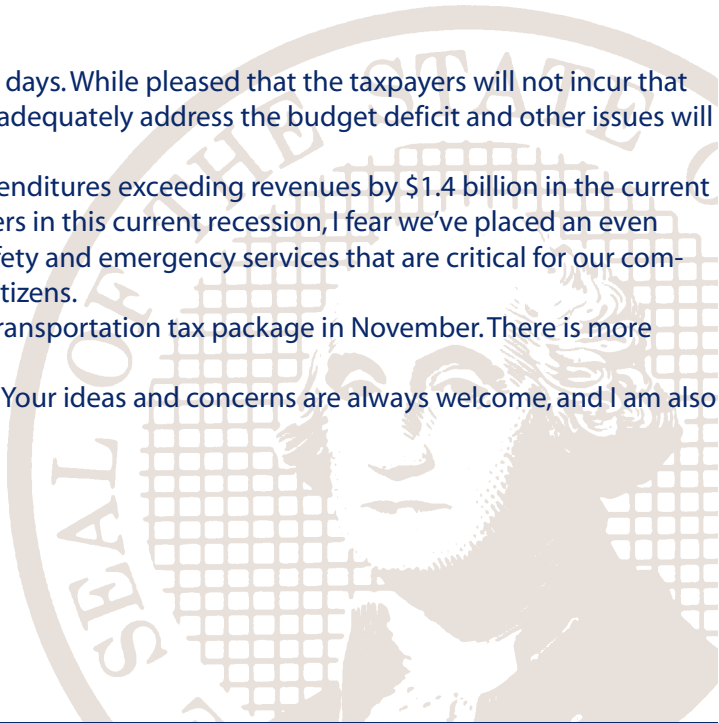
The state operating budget remains in desperate trouble, with expenditures exceeding revenues by \$1.4 billion in the current biennium. Rather than solving our budget problems to protect taxpayers in this current recession, I fear we've placed an even greater burden on them. In the process, we've compromised public safety and emergency services that are critical for our communities and made very little progress toward improving our economy and job opportunities for citizens.

The ongoing transportation debate will carry into the fall, as voters will have the final say on a transportation tax package in November. There is more information on this proposal in this newsletter.

My thanks to those of you who took the time to contact me during the 2002 legislative session. Your ideas and concerns are always welcome, and I am also here to help you whenever you have problems in your dealings with state government.

It's an honor to serve as your representative.
Sincerely,


Janéa Holmquist
State Representative



Democrat state budget raises stakes – and debt – for taxpayers

To the surprise of few, the state operating budget adopted by Democrats in the Legislature last June turned out to be fiscally unsound. The budget spent \$700 million more than revenue coming in. As the state’s economy continued its predicted decline, lawmakers were forced back to the drawing board this session to bring the budget back into balance.

Unfortunately, Democrat budget writers drafted a new plan that actually makes it worse – doubling the deficit spending to \$1.4 billion more than anticipated revenue.

The budget uses Enron-style accounting tricks to cover this deficit, spending nearly all of the state’s reserves and relying on a scheme to sell off future tobacco settlement payments in exchange for one-time cash. The up-front money will be used to pay operating expenses over the next 14 months, but it will cost the taxpayers in lost revenue for the next 30 years.

Frankly, it is credit-card spending at its worst. It’s like a family that has maxed out their credit cards to buy food. In the end, they’re out of money, they still have a family to feed, and now they have bills to pay from their mounting debt.

Perhaps worst of all, the budget protects the state bureaucracy, while cutting spending for education, health care, public safety, and services for the truly needy. There is no serious effort to reduce the size of government. The budget still increases state spending nearly 7 percent over the last biennium. The results, once again, are predictable. By the Democrats’ own admission, this budget will leave taxpayers with a \$1 billion shortfall at the start of the next biennium.



Don’t take my word for it...

Here’s what others are saying about the Democrat plan to borrow money against the state tobacco settlement payments. The proposal would use the borrowed cash to pay operating expenses over the next 14 months and pay back the loan over 30 years.

- “... a bad deal for Washington taxpayers.”
- Attorney General Christine Gregoire (Seattle P-I, 3/5/02)
- “... terrible fiscal policy.”
- State Treasurer Mike Murphy (Bremerton Sun, 3/8/02)
- “cockeyed...create(s) many more problems than it solves”
- Yakima Herald-Republic editorial (3/8/02)
- “... a bad idea ... We’ll pay a high price for this gimmick.”
- South (King) County Journal editorial (3/14/02)
- “... too big a gamble for the state.”
- Tacoma News Tribune editorial (3/6/02)
- “shameful”
- Tri-City Herald (4/5/02)

Public safety compromised in state budget

Despite the gimmicks that were used, the state operating budget still fails to adequately fund the one item we all agreed would be a priority this year – public safety. The budget effectively eliminates funding for cities and counties used for public safety and emergency services, such as police and fire protection.

This is simply inexcusable. There may be no higher priority to our citizens at this time, and there is perhaps no more important function of government than maintaining the safety of our communities.



Water policy moves forward, but not funding

Water continues to be a matter of high legislative priority for me, and I was pleased that we made progress in a couple of areas during the 60-day session. We adopted House Bill 2874 that will allow the Department of Ecology to enter into agreements with the federal government to allocate groundwater in the Columbia Basin Project.

The Joint Executive Legislative Water Policy Group (JEL) formed last year to work on improving the management of the state’s water resources, was given a directive by the governor: “to work collaboratively... to develop legislation for the 2002 session.” Negotiations centered on the following four issues:

- Instream flows
- Water for growing communities
- Use-it-or-lose-it policies (relinquishments)
- Funding for water infrastructure, including storage and drinking water systems



But as the 2002 legislative session progressed, it became clear that the members of JEL were not going to reach agreement. Some members were unwilling to provide the flexibility many growing communities need to ensure an adequate water supply is available to meet the demands of a growing population, focusing instead on the needs of fish, even if it meant taking water away from people and farms. This position was unacceptable to the Republican members in both the House and Senate.

In the last days of the session, agreement was reached on a water bill (HB 2993) that addressed some minor water issues - leaving the discussion on the four above issues for the next session.

Furthermore, funding to achieve these objectives fell victim to the budget cuts made by Democrat budget writers. I was very disappointed that a \$250,000 allocation to follow through on the commitments of the JEL for water planning was not included in the final budget package. Funding or not, I will continue to fight to protect water rights and work on these water management issues.

Transportation tax increase brought to voters

After a two-year battle on a transportation tax package, Republicans finally prevailed in our efforts to give voters the final say. A \$7.8 billion transportation plan will go on the ballot in November. It includes the following:

- A 9-cent gas tax increase phased in over two years (5 cents in 2003 and 4 cents in 2004)
- A 1 percent increase in the sales tax on new and used cars
- A 30 percent increase in weight fees for trucks

The law prohibits me from using this newsletter to advocate or oppose this upcoming ballot measure. But if you have additional questions about this transportation funding plan, you may contact me at my 13th District legislative office.

Efficiencies still lacking in transportation

While I was relieved that voters will get a chance to make this tax decision, I voted against this transportation tax bill when it came to the floor of the House. My main objection to the bill is I do not believe the state has done enough to show taxpayers that we are making the best use of their money in transportation.

Several important efficiency reforms were introduced this session, including measures to streamline permitting, increase opportunities to contract out road construction work through competitive bidding, and reforms to onerous wage laws that increase the cost of road construction, especially in rural areas. However, no meaningful efficiencies were adopted.

In fact, the majority party adopted very small efficiency measures, but declared that they would not take effect unless tax increases were enacted.

We should be looking for ways to improve accountability and restore public trust in government. That doesn’t happen when you tell taxpayers that we will only spend their money wisely if they agree to give government more.

Join me at a Town Hall Meeting

Please join me at one of my upcoming town hall meetings here in the 13th District. I’ll provide a brief overview of the 2002 session, discuss issues of concern, and answer any questions you may have regarding state government.

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend one of the meetings at the following locations:

Mattawa: Wednesday, May 22, 7-9p.m. at City Hall, 521 Government Road

Cle Elum: Thursday, May 23, 12-2p.m. No-Host lunch at Homestead Restaurant, 801 State Route 970.

Moxee: Thursday, May 23, 6-8p.m. at City Hall, 255 W. Seattle Ave.

Hope to see you there!